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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002086

SIPDIS

USAID FOR ANDREW NATSIOS  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER  
LONDON FOR CGURNEY  
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER  
PARIS FOR NEARY  
ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2012

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: UN FOOD SEIZED

Classified By: Political Officer Kimberly Jemison for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[11.](#) (U) SUMMARY: On September 7, Zimbabwe police and soldiers raided the UNICEF facilities and illegally seized food UNICEF had been storing for UN employees. After appealing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN received an apology from the guilty parties and expected to have the stolen food returned on September 11 but by mid-day on September 12 we were unable to confirm whether it had been returned. END SUMMARY.

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UN FOOD SEIZED  
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[12.](#) (U) On September 7, Zimbabwe police and soldiers raided the UNICEF compound and seized food UNICEF had been storing for the UN employees and their dependents, according to Kirk Hoffman, Operation Manager at UNICEF. The UN has been importing food every three months for its 1000 employees (3000 dependents) in Zimbabwe for several months. UNICEF kept the food on its premises because it has the space to do so and was in the process of distributing it when the police and soldiers raided the facility. In addition to seizing the food (there were eight staple food commodities), the police and soldiers beat up two UNICEF staff members and searched diplomatic (CD) vehicles.

[13.](#) (U) During the raid, UN officials advised the belligerents several times that they were violating UN immunities and privileges. After the attackers left, the UN complained to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the highest level and has since been provided with the names of the perpetrators, an apology, a promise to return the items by the end of the day on September 11, and permission to open a legal case against those who assaulted the UNICEF staff.

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FOOD AID SECURITY IN QUESTION  
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[14.](#) (C) COMMENT: The raid on UNICEF further flags concerns about the security of food aid imported into Zimbabwe. The fact that the Zimbabwe police and military can disregard the immunity afforded the UN and seize food does not particularly bode well for food secured by other international organizations. The Government's response in this case will provide clear indications of how similar problems will be handled in the future, and what additional steps might be necessary to ensure adequate security arrangements for donated food. END COMMENT.

SULLIVAN